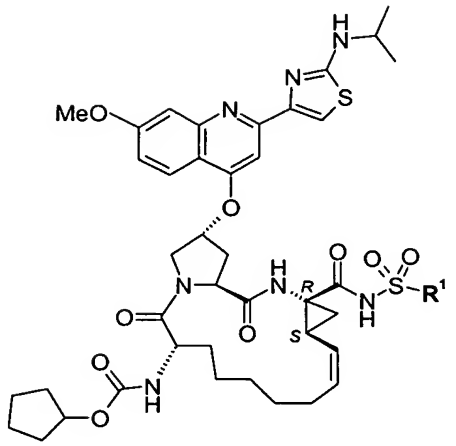
CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

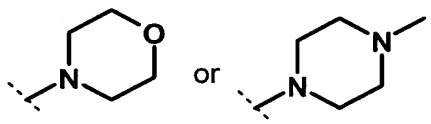
1. A compound of formula (I)



(I)

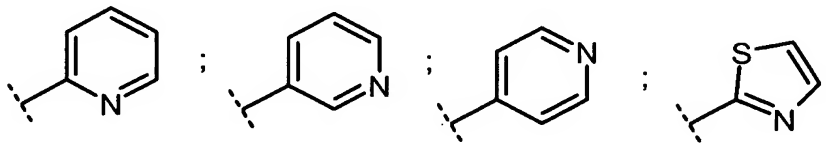
wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is (C_{1-8})alkyl, (C_{3-7})cycloalkyl, {(C_{1-6})alkyl-(C_{3-7})cycloalkyl} or Het, which are all optionally substituted from 1 to 3 times with halo, cyano, nitro, O-(C_{1-6})alkyl, amido, amino or phenyl; or $\mathbf{R^1}$ is C_6 or C_{10} aryl which is optionally substituted from 1 to 3 times with halo, cyano, nitro, (C_{1-6})alkyl, O-(C_{1-6})alkyl, amido, amino or phenyl; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

2. A compound according to claim 1, wherein said Het is:



;

or a heteroaryl selected from:.



said heteroaryl being optionally substituted with C_{1-6} alkyl.

3. A compound according to claim 1, wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is (C_{1-8})alkyl, (C_{3-7})cycloalkyl or {(C_{1-6})alkyl-(C_{3-7})cycloalkyl}, which are all optionally substituted from 1 to 3 times with

halo, cyano, nitro, O-(C_{1-6})alkyl, amido, amino or phenyl; or $\mathbf{R^1}$ is C_6 or C_{10} aryl which is optionally substituted from 1 to 3 times with halo, cyano, nitro, (C_{1-6})alkyl, O-(C_{1-6})alkyl, amido, amino or phenyl; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

4. A compound according to claim 3, wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is (C_{1-6})alkyl, (C_{3-6})cycloalkyl or {(C_{1-6})alkyl-(C_{3-6})cycloalkyl}, which are all optionally substituted from 1 to 3 times with halo, nitro or O-(C_{1-6})alkyl, or phenyl which is optionally substituted from 1 to 3 times with halo, nitro, (C_{1-6})alkyl or O-(C_{1-6})alkyl.

5. A compound according to claim 4, wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is methyl, ethyl, *n*-propyl, *i*-propyl, cyclopropyl, cyclobutyl, cyclopentyl, cyclopropylmethyl, cyclohexylethyl, CCl_3, CF_3, phenyl, 2-fluorophenyl, or 4-methylphenyl.

6. A compound according to claim 5 wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is methyl, cyclopropyl, CF_3 or phenyl.

7. A compound according to claim 6 wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is methyl.

8. A compound according to claim 6 wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is cyclopropyl.

9. A compound according to claim 6 wherein $\mathbf{R^1}$ is phenyl.

10. A pharmaceutical composition comprising an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of a compound of formula **I** according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, in admixture with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier medium or auxiliary agent.

11. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 10, further comprising a therapeutically effective amount α-interferon

12. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 10, further comprising a therapeutically effective amount of pegylated α-interferon.

13. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 10, further comprising a therapeutically effective amount of ribavirin.

14. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 11, further comprising a therapeutically effective amount of ribavirin.

15. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 12, further comprising a therapeutically effective amount of ribavirin.

16. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of a compound of formula I according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

17. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of the composition according to claim 10.

18. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of the composition according to claim 11.

19. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of the composition according to claim 12.

20. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of the composition according to claim 13.

21. A method of inhibiting the replication of hepatitis C virus comprising exposing the virus to a hepatitis C viral NS3 protease inhibiting amount of a compound of formula I according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

22. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of a

pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of formula I according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and one or more other anti-HCV agents.

23. A method according to claim 22, wherein said other anti-HCV agent is selected from the group consisting of: α-, β- δ-, γ-, ω-interferon, pegylated α-, β-, δ-, γ-, ω-interferon, ribavirin and amantadine.

24. A method according to claim 23, wherein said other anti-HCV agent is α-interferon.

25. A method according to claim 23, wherein said other anti-HCV agent is pegylated α-interferon.

26. A method according to claim 24, wherein the composition further comprises ribavirin.

27. A method according to claim 25, wherein the composition further comprises ribavirin.

28. A method of treating a hepatitis C viral infection in a mammal comprising administering to the mammal an anti-hepatitis C virally effective amount of a combination of a compound of formula I according to claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and one or more other anti-HCV agents, wherein said one or more other anti-HCV agents are administered to the mammal prior to, concurrently with, or following the administration of the compound of formula I.